

LONG ISLAND NEWSDAY
15 November 1985

Accused Spy's Wife Offered Deal: Agent

By Marianne Arneberg

A CIA officer promised the wife of accused Czechoslovakian spy Karl Koecher that she and her husband would be free to leave the country if they cooperated with federal officials investigating their activities, an FBI agent said yesterday.

Reading from a transcript of conversations that Koecher had with federal intelligence officials in November of last year, FBI agent Kenneth Geide said that CIA agent Jerry Brown told Koecher's wife, "You will be free to go to Austria" in exchange for information. "You will be free to go on about your business."

Despite their cooperation, the Koechers were arrested last Nov. 27, as they prepared to leave the country to resettle in Vienna. Koecher, 51, a translator for the CIA from 1973 to 1977, has been charged with espionage. His wife, Hana, 40, has refused to testify against her husband, citing marital immunity laws. Her refusal is being contested.

In a pretrial hearing yesterday to suppress 27 spools of taped conversation between Koecher and federal officials, Geide said that Brown assured the couple they would "be perfectly safe" within six months, "and in effect, you will have a new beginning, and a new life."

"It sounds really great," Mrs. Koecher replied, in a transcript of the conversation read by Geide. Brown then said: "And I promise . . . I guarantee you that. That's what I intend."

Geide said that he, Brown and the Koechers were present during the conversation, which took place in a midtown Manhattan hotel room shortly after Geide met Koecher Nov. 15 on a West 47th Street sidewalk. Geide insisted that he never made promises to the couple. But, he said, he made a "tactical" decision not to correct Brown because, "I saw it as counterproductive to interfere with what he was doing."

When the statements were made, Geide said, "It didn't strike me that they were promises or guarantees." In retrospect, he said, "some of the things he [Brown] said, I would characterize it as poor interview techniques."